The Law of the Father: tyrannical fathers and rebellious sons in John McGahern's *Amongst Women* and Driss Chraïbi's *Le Passé simple*

At first glance, John McGahern and Driss Chraïbi may appear to be worlds apart, yet their works have simultaneously shocked and enthralled readers in Ireland and Morocco. Both authors hold up mirrors to their respective societies and the raw images that they reveal have not always been welcomed by readers. By unveiling social taboos and railing against outdated religious and cultural mores, both writers' works reveal societies struggling to come to terms with modernity.

This essay will examine ambivalent father-son relations in John McGahern's *Amongst Women* (1990) and Driss Chraïbi's *Le Passé simple* (1954). Moran, the tyrannical patriarch of Great Meadow in McGahern's penultimate novel, and le Seigneur, the protagonist of *Le Passé simple*, Chraïbi's first novel, are burdened by their familial responsibilities and yet display a deep-seated anxiety that they are losing control over their families. This anxiety manifests itself in an overbearing desire to control their sons, which in both cases culminates in the sons' revolt against paternal authority. Drawing on Emmanuel Levinas's theory regarding the possibility of forging an ethical relationship with the other, it will be argued that the literary works of McGahern and Chraïbi engage in a wider debate about the role of ethics in contemporary society.[1]

The core of Levinas's ethics is summarised in the following excerpt from *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*:

> The suspicions engendered by psychoanalysis, sociology and politics weigh on human identity such that we never know to whom we are speaking and what we are dealing with when we build our ideas on the basis of human facts. But we do not need this knowledge in the relationship in which the other is a neighbor, and in which before being an individuation of the genus *man*, a *rational animal*, a *free will*, or any essence whatever, he is the persecuted one for whom I am responsible to the point of being a hostage for him.[2]

Levinas's assertion that the self is held hostage by the other and responsible for him has been condemned by many contemporary thinkers as a utopian ideal. Many critics have rejected Levinas's ethics, claiming that it leads inevitably to the surrender of the self to the other. For instance, in *Trouble with Strangers*, Terry Eagleton concludes that, in Levinas's thought, 'it is as a scapegoat that the subject comes into being'.[3] Similarly, Edward Gibson, referring to Levinas's concept of sensibility and quoting *Otherwise than Being*, writes 'it appears as a "for the other" that is "total gratuity"'.[4]

Despite such criticisms, others have embraced Levinas's ethics as a novel means of understanding the other, which forces us to reflect more deeply on the nature of our social and political interactions, emphasising our duty towards others. For instance, David Jopling argues that Levinas's thought reveals:

> A deeper form of relation: encountering, meeting, confronting the Other. It is meeting and sharing which makes sense. This is the original human relation: it is transcendence in the original sense – transcendence as *scandere trans*, meaning "to climb over", "to go across", to leave oneself, to go towards the Other.[5]

While it may be argued that Levinas's ethical sense of responsibility for the other might be unrealistic or lead to an erosion of subjectivity in political and social relations, it is reasonable to argue that, in the context of literature, an ethical relationship with the other can be empowering.

The desire to forge ethical relationships with others is perceptible throughout Chraïbi's oeuvre, in particular *Le Passé simple*. In an interview with the editor of the Moroccan literary journal *Souffles* in 1967 Chraïbi revealed that his relationships with other people are the lifeblood of his work:

> J'ai toujours été animé par quatre passions: le besoin d'amour, la soif de la connaissance lucide et directe, la passion de la liberté, pour moi-même et pour les autres ; et enfin la participation à la souffrance d'autrui.[6]

This preoccupation with the freedom and welfare of others could be described as an ethical concern. The quest for love and knowledge and the challenges of striking a balance between freedom and responsibility for others are the central motifs of *Le Passé simple*, a novel in which Chraïbi explores whether an ethical relationship with the other is possible.

McGahern is another contemporary author whose works reflect on the possibility and limitations of individual freedom and manifest a desire to ascertain whether relations with the other can transcend the traditional power dynamics of family and community life. In both *Le Passé simple* and *Amongst Women* there are instances of characters who, either consciously or unconsciously, establish ethical relations with others through an empathetic concern for their wellbeing. In both texts this concern for the other, which could be described as an ethical imperative, engenders interesting narrative implications which are worth examining further.

Chraïbi's novel *Le Passé simple* is related in the first person and is a retrospective account of the protagonist's revolt against his father and the customs of traditional Moroccan

society. It is a semi-autobiographical narrative based partially on Chraïbi's personal experiences. In his memoirs, Chraïbi describes the reception of *Le Passé simple* by critics in Morocco and France, recalling how the response amongst French critics was marked by a tendency to politicise the novel and downplay its literary qualities:

> Après quelques aperçus exotiques, la presse venait de s'emparer de mon livre et le politisait à l'envi, tout en le vidant de sa substance littéraire. Le mensuel *Hommes et Mondes* me consacrait tout son dernier numéro, sous le titre « Le Maroc mis à nu ». Je ne comprenais plus rien.[7]

Chraïbi's trademark irony is again apparent in the scene where he relates the reaction of Philippe Rossignol, the director of Editions Denoël, the French publisher of the novel, when he expressed his surprise that the novel had been hijacked for political ends by certain leading lights of the French intelligentsia:

> — Vous avez lancé une bombe […] et vous vous étonnez que ça fasse du bruit? Tant mieux si on en parle, en bien ou en mal, mais qu'on en parle ! […]
> — Mais on tronque, on extrapole, on déforme mon propos.[8]

Chraïbi was alluding to the moderate Catholic writer François Mauriac, who despite being a journalist for the conservative newspaper *Le Figaro*, criticised French attempts to quash the Moroccan independence movement which was gaining momentum in 1954 when the novel was published.[9] The works of both writers were banned by conservative authorities in Ireland and Morocco on the pretext that, if released into the public domain, they would corrupt the moral fibre of the nation. In Morocco, the response to Chraïbi's novel was so virulent that it was banned by the government until 1977.[10] It is interesting to note that McGahern's work elicited a similar response amongst critics in Ireland, with Anne Enright describing his short stories as 'the literary equivalent of a hand grenade rolled across the kitchen floor'.[11]

While the political and social legacies of the War of Independence and the Civil War set the background to *Amongst Women*, the narrative focus is not Moran's betrayed dreams of reaching a higher social standing in the new Free State but rather the portrayal of family life in rural Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s. In a similar vein, while *Le Passé simple* evokes the burgeoning independence movement in Morocco in the early 1950s, the political dimension fades into the background as the family drama takes centre stage. Le Seigneur, the tyrannical father, dominates his wife and children as though they are his property. In a memorable scene, he tells them that he controls their fate:

> Sais-tu ce que nous permet la Loi? […] De vous chasser tous […] Les femmes s'achètent et les enfants se fabriquent. Et au besoin nous nous passerions des lois […] Mais votre châtiment sera de rester ici, chacun de vous y poursuivant ses turpitudes, ses haines, ses viduités, ses rages […] toi surtout, Driss.[12]

The central event of the novel is the murder of Hamid, the youngest child, by his father. It is Driss's ethical reaction to this traumatic event that empowers him to revolt against le Seigneur. By rejecting his father's law, Driss symbolically denounces the traditional laws of Muslim society which enshrine the role of the father. At the time when Chraïbi wrote the novel, the rights of Moroccan fathers were protected by a long tradition of Islamic jurisprudence which subordinated women and children to the diktats of the father.[13]

In both novels, the fathers control their families as though they are directing actors on a stage. Both le Seigneur and Moran desperately want the family unit to remain whole since, if the family were to disintegrate, their sense of self would be shattered. Consequently, both Moran and le Seigneur attempt to protect their egos from the affront of being rejected by their sons. For instance, le Seigneur accuses Driss of wanting to leave home, which he sees as a desire to reject his family and his Muslim heritage:

> Ton rêve? Il est de nous quitter et de nous oublier tous, bien, vite et totalement, dès que tu seras parti […] de nous haïr, de haïr tout ce qui est musulman, tout ce qui est arabe.[14]

Both fathers view the outside world as a threat. Moran strives to keep his family separate from the wider society outside of Great Meadow, and it is only on rare occasions that he concedes to allow his family to associate with their neighbours:

> As it came through Rose he encouraged it as much as he would have discouraged visits to any other neighbouring house […] As Moran encouraged them they could go without guilt.[15]

Similarly, le Seigneur shuns the outside world and keeps his relations with it to a minimum.[16] However, the behaviour of Luke Moran and Driss Ferdi destabilises their fathers' claims to omnipotence and undermines the integrity of the family unit. In *Amongst Women* many of Moran's fits of bad temper are caused by reminders of his absent son Luke. On one occasion, Moran's anxiety about replying to Luke's letter leads to a heated argument with Rose: '[h]e got pen and writing pad and sat at the table. He deliberated for a long time in front of the pad, and then suddenly rose and put it away without writing anything.'[17]

It could be argued that Moran fails to understand Luke because he fails to communicate with him. Indeed, the difficulty of communication between father and son is a recurring theme throughout the novel. On more than one occasion Moran's troubled relationship with Luke impacts negatively on the other family members:

> Moran had always put on such a hurt air when Luke's name came up that she [Rose] assumed he didn't want to hear about him at all, that he found it too disturbing; but she learned that the opposite was true, that Moran couldn't bring himself to ask the girls.[18]

When Rose suggests that Moran write to Luke to ask him to meet Maggie in London he retorts: 'I wrote him several times and all the answer I ever got was I'm-well-here-and-I-hope-you-are-well-there. Is that natural after all the years of bringing him up?'[19] When Luke replies to Moran's letter with a telegram, Moran vents his anger by verbally attacking Rose and destroys the note.

Undoubtedly, the person who is most affected by the breakdown of the relationship between Moran and Luke is Moran himself. The onset of Moran's depression coincides with Michael's announcement that he is getting married: '[h]e took to writing letters again. There wasn't a week he didn't write to Maggie in London or to Michael'.[20] The marriage of the youngest son exacerbates Moran's anxiety that the family is disintegrating: '[t]he changeless image of itself that the house so fiercely held to was now being threatened in small ways by the different reality the untutored and uncaring outside world saw.'[21] As he grows older, Moran's sense of remorse at the breakdown of his relationship with his eldest son becomes more acute:

> He kept repeating to Rose how he felt that he had only really failed with one of his children and that it troubled him more than any of his other dealings throughout his life.[22]

It becomes apparent that the source of Moran's mental suffering is the loss of Luke, over whom he no longer asserts control. On several occasions Luke refuses to return to Great Meadow, despite his siblings' encouragement and remonstrations. Moran's suffering derives from the fact that he can only perceive or relate to Luke through his absence.

Moran and le Seigneur fail to communicate with their sons because their sense of responsibility is not based on an ethical concern for the other; rather, it is based on the instinct of self-preservation. Both fathers financially provide for their families but do not treat their children as equals. For Levinas, equality is the basis for an ethical relationship with

the other. Levinas goes so far as to argue that putting the interests and needs of others before one's own interests is the only ethical form of relationship: 'I become a responsible or ethical "I" to the extent that I agree to depose or dethrone myself – to abdicate my position of centrality – in favour of the vulnerable other.'[23] This idea forms the core of Levinas's refutation of Sartre's conception of the relation between self and other as outlined in *L'Etre et le néant*.[24] In an interview with Richard Kearney, Levinas identifies the source of his disagreement with Sartre as a difference of opinion regarding the relationship between the self and the other:

> In Sartre the phenomenon of the other was still considered, as in all Western ontology, to be a modality of unity and fusion, that is a reduction of the other to the categories of the same. This is described by Sartre as a teleological project to unite and totalize the for-itself and the in-itself, the self and the other-than-self. It is here that my fundamental philosophical disagreement with Sartre lay.[25]

Levinas's concept of the relationship with the other is diametrically opposed to Sartre's view as it is predicated on a relationship with the other where the other's freedom is considered more important than that of the self.

In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas's argument focuses on responsibility for the other. While Levinas posits that we all have an ethical responsibility towards those with whom we have no filial ties, it could be argued that, in the context of the traditional societies of Ireland and Morocco, responsibility is first and foremost to one's family. While relationships between fathers and sons are fraught with tensions in both novels, relations between siblings are revealed in a more positive light. The Moran girls attempt to keep the family traditions alive, and to lift their father's spirits, by restoring the rituals of 'Monaghan day'. In *Le Passé simple*, however, relationships between siblings are more complicated due to the fact that the father has killed his youngest son. Throughout the novel, it appears as though Driss over-identifies with his deceased brother Hamid to the point where a desire for revenge replaces a sense of fraternity. It could be argued that Driss is haunted by Hamid and becomes obsessed with destroying his father. For Levinas, a sense of responsibility for the other is a form of persecution: '[i]t is as though persecution by another were at the bottom of solidarity with another'.[26] He goes on to write:

> The recurrence of the self in responsibility for others, a persecuting obsession, goes against intentionality, such that responsibility for others could never mean altruistic will, instinct of "natural benevolence", or love. It is in the passivity of obsession, or incarnated passivity, that an identity individuates itself as unique.[27]

According to Levinas's schema, the self is obsessed by those towards whom one feels a sense of responsibility, to the point where the self incorporates the other: '[t]he psyche can signify this alterity […] in the form of incarnation, as being-in-one's-skin, having-the-other-in-one's-skin.'[28] In the context of *Le Passé simple*, this incarnation takes the form of Driss's obsessive attachment with his deceased brother. In a similar way, the Moran girls describe their reaction to their father's death in terms reminiscent of Levinas's notion of incorporation:

> They knew that he had always been at the very living centre of all parts of their lives […] now, as they left him under the yew, it was as if each of them in their different ways had become Daddy.[29]

Driss's response to Hamid's death bears many similarities to Levinas's 'malady of identity', a thwarted form of mourning that resembles what Freud referred to as melancholia: '[i]n the form of responsibility, the psyche in the soul is the other in me, a malady of identity, both accused and *self*.'[30] This point can be reinforced by examining Driss's internal monologues during Hamid's wake, in which he imagines that he is speaking to Hamid:

> Mon petit oiseau, je resterai debout devant tes os et ton crin végétal jusqu'à ce que le centimètre de bougie se sera transformé en un grésillement fumant, jusqu'à ce que des ânonnements coraniques auront noyé le silence.[31]

Just as Driss over-identifies with Hamid, Moran mourns the loss of Luke: even though he is alive, the relationship has broken down irreparably and Moran grieves for this loss.

Both novels are replete with examples of obsessive behaviour and rituals enacted by the father. Life in the Moran and Ferdi households is regulated by the unchanging rituals of meal and prayer times. In McGahern's novel, saying the rosary and letter-writing assume a ritualistic quality, while in *Le Passé simple* the ritual of the evening meal is endowed with symbolic importance. In these cases, the rituals are introduced by the father as a means of asserting his control over his family. For Moran, the bonding rituals of religion and letter-writing bring fleeting moments of solace, but ultimately fail to hold the family together, as testified by Luke's absence:

> It was the first Christmas anybody had even been absent and Moran seemed to be painfully aware of Luke's absence: "You'd think he'd come for the Christmas or even write but never a word, no thought for anybody except himself".[32]

Similarly, Driss's revolt begins as a reaction against his father's excessive authority. In a move to sever all attachments to his father, he exposes how he breaks the laws of Islam by summoning the entire family to reveal the bottles of alcohol in his father's cabinet and his infidelities.[33] A key scene in *Le Passé simple* is the mock-execution scene where Driss points a gun at his father and pulls the trigger, only to reveal that the barrel is empty. In gratitude for his son's willingness to forgive him, le Seigneur washes Driss's feet, an act which symbolises a newly-found awareness that they are equals.

In the essay 'La proximité de l'autre', Levinas argues that ethical concerns precede strictly philosophical considerations:

> Quand je parle de philosophie première, je me réfère à une philosophie du dialogue qui ne peut pas ne pas être une éthique. Même la philosophie qui questionne le sens de l'être le fait à partir de la rencontre d'autrui. Ce serait là une manière de subordonner la connaissance, l'objectivation à la rencontre d'autrui.[34]

For Levinas, the ethical relationship is based on a movement towards the other and is mediated by language.[35] Dialogue is fundamentally important in this relationship with the other. In *Le Passé simple* le Seigneur does not engage in dialogue with his children; rather, like a tyrant, he decrees and his children are compelled to obey. The children's submissiveness to their father's law is the basis of family life in the household until the moment of Driss's revolt. Significantly, his revolt is one of word rather than deed. In a similar vein, it could be argued that, as the dialogue between Moran and Luke breaks down irrevocably in *Amongst Women*, there is no possibility for an ethical relationship between father and son. This is borne out by the strained conversation when Moran is reunited with Luke at Sheila's wedding. Luke tells Moran and Rose that they would be welcome to visit him in London, yet Moran retorts dryly: '[w]e'll not be in London' and refuses to shake Luke's hand.[36] Once again, Moran fails to communicate with Luke as he cannot overcome his egotistical instinct to subordinate others.

In interview with Kearney, Levinas invokes the concept of the face, a rhetorical device that recurs in his work, to explain the relationship between self and other:

> To expose myself to the vulnerability of the face is to put my ontological right to existence into question. In ethics, the other's right to exist has primacy over my own, a primacy epitomized in the ethical edict: you shall not kill […] The ethical rapport with the face is asymmetrical in that it subordinates my existence to the other.[37]

Levinas revisits this point in 'La proximité de l'autre', where he describes the emergence of subjectivity as a form of self-love akin to narcissism:

> Cet amour de soi est un égoïsme qui fonde l'être et constitue la première expérience ontologique. Cette expérience en appelle à l'ouverture et à la véritable sortie de soi. L'humain passera par une autre étape décisive où le sujet malgré sa satisfaction échoue à se suffire. Toute sortie de soi représente la fissure qui s'instaure dans le Même vers l'Autre. Désir métamorphosé en attitude d'ouverture à l'extériorité. Ouverture qui est appel et réponse à autrui. La proximité de l'autre, origine de toute mise en question de soi.[38]

For Levinas, therefore, opening up to the other in an ethical relationship necessarily entails a shattering of the ego. It is interesting to examine the relevance of Levinas's idea of the proximity towards the other in relation to these novels. There is an element of claustrophobia to the family settings elucidated in both texts. However, while the fathers attempt to control the family members' relationships with the outside world, they ultimately fail to do so. Both fathers are self-obsessed and prone to self-pity and are so concerned to protect the integrity of their egos that they fail to open up to the other. It would seem that Moran and le Seigneur are too narcissistic to be able to engage ethically with other human beings.

Just as Moran's relationship with Luke is characterised by silence, before Driss's revolt his relationship with his father is based on him listening silently to the latter's monologues. Driss and his siblings are terrified of their father due to his penchant for violence and silently obey his commands. His children try to placate him by saying the right thing and the evening meal is a ritual to which everyone must adhere. The rituals at meal times are echoed at prayer times. Driss compares the scene to a staged production where everyone knows their role and performs it automatically: '[n]ous sautons du lit, hiver comme été, à heure fixe, comme des pantins bien réglés pour la prière de l'aube.'[39] Like the Moran children, Driss and his siblings are the objects of their father's violent rages and are beaten into submission: '[i]ls ont grandi dans la peur et appris le silence. Comme ce soir tous les soirs ils sont cinq ombres sur le mur.'[40] In one memorable scene early in the novel, le Seigneur accuses Driss of failing to fast during the holy month of Ramadan and threatens to punish him: '[f]ouetté jusqu'au sang, lynché, incinéré, voilà le châtiment réservé aux parjures de ton espèce.'[41] Despite this warning not to defy his father's wish that he fulfil his religious obligations, Driss's revolt gains momentum as he publicly rejects Islam during a prayer gathering in the mosque where he makes a speech insulting the imam and narrowly escapes being attacked by an angry crowd of worshippers.[42]

By denouncing the imam, whose dubious morality and hypocrisy were displayed when he tried to seduce Driss, and openly flaunting the teachings of Islam, he is at the same time revolting against the father's decree that he observe Islamic rituals. Indeed, his revolt against Islam is the precursor to his revolt against his father. There is a sense that he must deny the religion in which he was raised before he can rebel against his father: '[v]oyez, mon Dieu: Haj Fatmi Ferdi m'a appris à vous aimer—dans la peur du corps et la desolation de l'âme'.[43] It is significant that Driss equates God's law with the law of the father. He rejects Islam because his father uses its teachings to justify violence towards his wife and children: '[i]l a appliqué votre loi, une femme qu'il a torturée […] des fils qu'il lie, ligote, taille, écrase, le devoir et l'honneur, dit-il.'[44] The scene in the mosque is a pivotal moment in the novel as it signals the emergence of Driss's ego. Prior to this point, Driss's character could almost be described as schizophrenic as he saw himself uniquely through the eyes of others: his friend Roche, a symbol of French civilisation and decadence, and le Seigneur, an incarnation of paternalistic Moroccan society. His true self can only emerge in the act of revolt against le Seigneur, leading to a moment of self-awareness during which he accepts responsibility for the fate of his siblings.

Driss sets out to avenge Hamid's death and to rescue his siblings from their violent father by revealing his hypocrisy in the hope of undermining the power that he exerts over the family. In a society where wives and children have few rights, Driss attempts to assert the right to justice that Hamid was denied. In 'La proximité de l'autre', Levinas writes that the realisation of one's ethical responsibility towards the other is experienced as a sort of interpellation: '[c]ette voix est un ordre, j'ai l'ordre de répondre de la vie de l'autre l'homme. Je n'ai pas le droit de le laisser seul à sa mort'.[45] As Levinas argues, responsibility for the other is an overwhelming burden as it entails advocating on behalf of others. He describes this 'being for the other' as akin to being held hostage by the other:

> Cette manière d'être pour l'autre, c'est-à-dire, d'être responsable pour l'autre, c'est quelque chose de terrible car cela signifie que si l'autre fait quelque chose, c'est moi qui suis responsable. L'otage est celui que l'on trouve responsable de ce qu'il n'a pas fait. Celui qui est responsable de la faute d'autrui.[46]

Levinas's ideas concerning the guilt of the survivor bring into relief Driss's reaction to Hamid's death. In *Dieu, la mort et le temps*, Levinas writes of the effect that the death of the other exerts on the ego:

> The Other individuates me in my responsibility for him. The death of the Other affects me in my very identity as a responsible I […] made up of unspeakable

> responsibility. This is how I am affected by the death of the Other […] It is, in my relation, my deference toward someone who no longer responds, already a guilt of the survivor.[47]

It is revealed that, on discovering that Driss had stolen from him, le Seigneur punished Hamid, his accomplice, by beating him. When Driss finally confronts his father about Hamid's death, it is revealed as a moment of awakening:

> Cette petite phrase tous les soirs comme un coup de gong s'abat: "Tout le monde est-il encore en ablutions?" De vous à nous, de vous le théocratique et l'immaculé à nous a priori sujets aux souillures. Je dis : de quel droit ? [48]

The drama intensifies as Driss puts his father on trial in front of his family: '[l]'avez-vous tué à coups de poing ou vous êtes-vous servi d'un gourdin ?'[49] The room is transformed into a courtroom and his brothers are called to testify to their father's crime. Driss accuses his father of murder: '[v]os deux taloches, savez-vous ce qu'elles signifient? Traumatisme, hémorragie cérébrale, homicide volontaire : vous êtes un assassin.'[50]

It is significant that Driss's sense of responsibility for Hamid is the catalyst of his revolt against his father. When Driss realises that Hamid was a scapegoat and that he died due to his actions, he becomes aware of his obligation to act to avenge his death. This scene is pivotal as it signals Driss's movement from passivity to action: '[j]e ramène cette mort à une vérité simple: elle est l'action. Je la traduis brèche, si minime soit-elle dans la citadelle nommée le Seigneur'.[51] In a sense, Driss becomes a hostage to Hamid as he feels that he has a duty to avenge his murder. Driss's actions following Hamid's death—his decision to empty his father's food store in an attempt to ruin him financially—are driven by an ethical responsibility for the other; significantly, Driss's first act of revolt against le Seigneur takes place immediately after Hamid's funeral. Le Seigneur's 'confession' following the mock execution scene is a key turning point in the narrative. In interview, Levinas explains: '[l]anguage as saying is an ethical openness to the other'.[52] By revealing his motives to Driss, le Seigneur symbolically asks for forgiveness and agrees to allow him to emigrate to France: '[i]l dit qu'il donne leur pain à mes frères, leur verse leur thé. Moi, j'ai obtenu, docile, repentant, qu'il m'envoie en France.'[53]

The novels culminate in very different endings. While le Seigneur repents and is reconciled with Driss, Moran offers an apology to Luke but does not humiliate himself by attempting to explain his mistakes. Moran's request for forgiveness does not meet with the expected response and Luke does not return when Moran is dying. Conversely, by forgiving his father, by opening up to him in response to an ethical imperative, Driss simultaneously

reconnects with his family. However, he reveals that this reconciliation is temporary and suggests that a more significant revolt is yet to come: '[j]e reviendrai, accepterai avec reconnaissance […] la fortune qu'il me destine. Alors, mais seulement alors, je me révolterai. Proprement, à coup sûr.'[54] In a similar way, Luke Moran rejects his father, but more importantly perhaps, he rejects the claustrophobia and lack of opportunities that rural life in Ireland would have held for him had he chosen to take over the family farm. Both Chraïbi and McGahern suggest that revolt against the father, culminating in exile, is the only means to achieve independence and a sense of self.

One of the major differences between Moran and le Seigneur is that the former fails while the latter succeeds to communicate with their sons. Ultimately, both fathers are driven by their passions rather than by an ethical concern for the other. While le Seigneur breaks what might be termed the ethical imperative not to kill in a very real sense, Moran does not go to such lengths in his attempt to dominate his offspring. The source of both Moran's and le Seigneur's malaise can be identified as a failure to fully understand the other. Moments of honest communication are rare in both novels. Significantly, it is not until Driss symbolically castrates his father in the mock-execution scene that they can truly communicate. In *Amongst Women*, however, there is no such epiphany: the son remains a mystery to the father and the failure to communicate with the other signals the impossibility of solidarity. Ultimately, although surrounded by his family, Moran is alone as he has failed to reconnect with Luke. While Moran ultimately does not embrace an ethical relationship with the other, le Seigneur eventually recognises the error of his ways and opens up to the other by demonstrating a willingness to change and to put the needs of the other before his own.

[1] John McGahern, *Amongst Women* (London: Faber, 1990). Driss Chraïbi, *Le Passé simple* (Paris: Denoël, 1954). The 1986 folio edition (Paris: Gallimard) will be referred to throughout this essay.
[2] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998), p. 59.
[3] Terry Eagleton, *Trouble with Strangers: A Study of Ethics* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 225.
[4] Edward Gibson, *Postmodernity, Ethics and the Novel: From Leavis to Levinas* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.165.
[5] David Jopling, 'Levinas, Sartre, and Understanding the Other', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 24, No. 3, October 1993, 214-231, p.230.
[6] 'Questionnaire', *Souffles*, No. 5, 1er trimestre 1967, 5-10, p. 5.
[7] Chraïbi, *Le Monde à côté*, p. 46.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Yves Beigbeder, *Judging War Crimes and Torture: French Justice and International Criminal Tribunals and Commissions (1941-2005)* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006), p. 54. In his plenary paper at 'A Way of Seeing: 50 years of McGahern in print', Eamon Maher elucidated the synergies between the works of McGahern and Mauriac.
[10] Danielle Marx-Scouras, 'A Literature of Departure: the Cross-cultural Writing of Driss Chraïbi', *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Summer 1992), 131-144, p. 131.
[11] Anne Enright, 'The Irish Short Story', *The Guardian*, 6 November 2010. Accessed 20/05/'13.
[12] Chraïbi, *Le Passé simple* p.61. A literal translation of 'le seigneur' is 'the lord'.
[13] For an overview of the codification of family law in post-independence Morocco see Fatima Harrak, 'The History and Significance of the New Moroccan Family Code', *Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa* working paper No. 09-2002, March 2009, p. 2.
[14] Chraïbi, *Le Passé simple*,p.61.
[15] John McGahern, *Amongst Women* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 33.
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